

Breakfast

Key to Academic Excellence

All children need breakfast every day

Bottom Line: It takes more than books for a child to learn

Every student needs to eat breakfast because a hungry child can't learn. Yet many children come to school without eating breakfast. Children may not eat breakfast because they don't have time or aren't hungry when they wake up. With busy family schedules, many children are left to prepare breakfast on their own. Those who do eat may choose low-nutrient foods that don't sustain energy levels throughout the morning. And for some children, food insufficiency may be an issue. Whatever the reason, the School Breakfast Program can help. Many core subjects are taught in the morning, so why not make sure school breakfast fuels your child with the energy needed to perform better in school?



"The link between good nutrition and good education is clearly demonstrated by higher test scores, better attendance and fewer behavior problems in school."

— Dan Glickman, Former US Secretary of Agriculture

Benefits of School Breakfast

Children benefit because they:

- Have higher test scores, work faster, make fewer errors and are more creative
- Are less likely to be sent to the principal or visit the school nurse
- Are better able to concentrate on learning
- Are more cooperative and get along better with classmates
- Are healthier and have improved attendance

Parents benefit because:

- Mornings are easier
- Children start the day ready to learn
- Concerns about breakfast skipping are relieved

Teachers benefit because:

- Behavior improves
- Academic success improves
- Attention increases

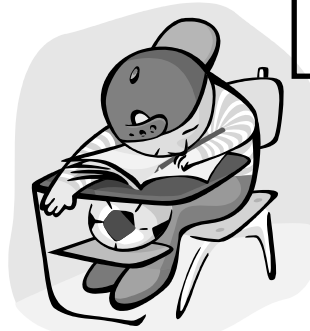
Principals/Superintendents benefit because:

- Attendance increases
- Test scores increase
- Discipline problems decrease



When hunger strikes, children lose their focus.

Some stay at their desk and fade. Others "feel sick" and ask to go to the school nurse. And others just poke the child next to them.



No matter how a child responds to the discomfort of hunger, all children lose out on learning when they don't eat breakfast.



School Breakfast: A Smart Choice for Busy Parents

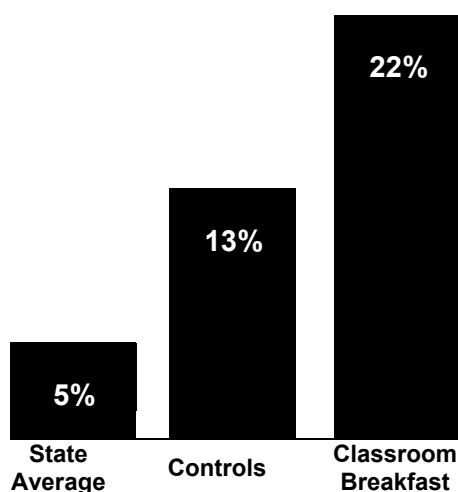
In many classrooms, demanding school subjects like math and science are taught in the morning. When children eat breakfast at school, they start the day fueled to learn so they can do their best on their hardest work. School breakfasts are planned to meet one-fourth of children's daily nutrient needs, so they also help sustain students' energy throughout the morning.

Breakfast Programs Boost Brain Power

Two case studies in action...

- Maryland Meals for Achievement breakfast pilot program offers classroom breakfast to all students. The program found tardiness declined by 8 percent, suspensions decreased by 1.6 days per month, standardized test scores increased 17 percent over the state average and behavior improved.

Percent Improvement in MSPAP* "Satisfactory" Rating



*Maryland School Performance Assessment Program, 2001

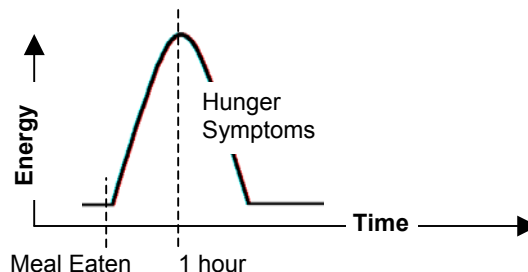
- By offering a nutritious breakfast to all students at little or no charge in more than 300 elementary schools, Minnesota's Fast Break to Learning school breakfast program helped prepare more than 40,000 children for a full morning of learning. The results from this breakfast program further support the link between making breakfast available, students' readiness to learn and academic achievement.



Wise Food Choices Enhance Learning

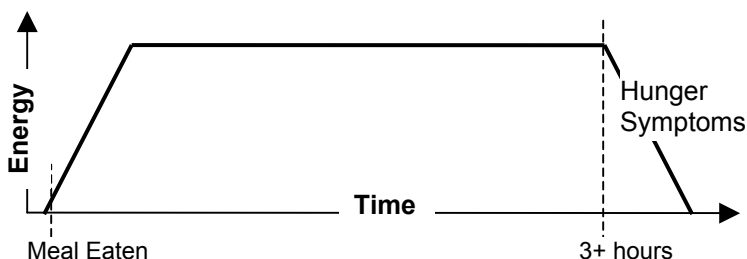
Comparison of energy available for learning from two different breakfasts

Breakfast #1: Sweetened Fruit Drink or Soda, Fruit-Filled Toaster Pastry



Sugary foods such as fruit, fruit juice or fruit drinks, candy or soda eaten in place of a meal cause a quick rise in blood sugar and energy in children. About an hour later, blood sugar and energy decline rapidly, bringing on symptoms of hunger.

Breakfast #2: Orange Juice, Toast or Cereal, Nonfat or 1% Milk



A healthy breakfast includes at least three Food Groups of the Food Guide Pyramid such as fruit or juice, bread or cereal and milk. These foods contain sugar, starch, protein and fat that digest at different rates and keep blood sugar up so energy levels are sustained throughout the morning.

A Breakfast Success Story

Prudence Crandall Elementary School, Enfield, CT: Over one month's time, Principal Richard Askin helped Food Service Director Eleanor McDaniel double school breakfast participation from 24 to 48 percent by announcing the daily menu on the intercom; hanging school breakfast posters that the children created; and sending home an encouraging notice about breakfast in the school newsletter for parents.



Connecticut State Department of Education and the New England Dairy & Food Council, 2002

Adapted with permission from Western Dairy Council

Resources

- Better Breakfast, Better Learning*, California Department of Education, 1994.
- Maryland Meals for Achievement Classroom Breakfast Pilot Program*, Maryland State Department of Education, 2001.
- School Breakfast Programs: Energizing the Classroom*, Minnesota Department of Children, Families and Learning, 1998.
- Teachers' Perceptions of the School Breakfast Program*, Connecticut State Department of Education, 1994.

For more information, contact the Connecticut State Department of Education Office of Child Nutrition at (860) 807-2070.